



No. 863	Author Steven E. Backs, Wildlife Research Biologist	Date 7/13/04
	Title Wild Turkey Restoration - Winter, 2004	

**Abstract:** *A total of 167 wild turkeys was trapped from 6 January to 16 February 2004 with 156 wild turkeys translocated to the nine release sites. The 2004 restoration work brings the total number of wild turkey releases in Indiana to 185 with 2,795 birds released since 1956. The 2004 restoration effort was the largest number of wild turkeys ever trapped and translocated in-state in a single trapping season.*

**Work Plan: # 204010**

Populations of wild turkeys were generally low to nonexistent in east central Indiana due to the generally low quality turkey habitat. The area was never targeted for wild turkey restoration due to the relatively low quality turkey habitat and the continual evaluation of other wild turkey releases in very marginal habitats elsewhere in Indiana. A preliminary assessment to identify potential wild turkey release areas was completed in August 2003 using criteria and techniques described in Backs and Eisfelder (1990). The initial assessment was later jointly refined, beginning in December 2003, with input and field reconnaissance by the Wild Turkey Project Leader, District Biologists and local Conservation Law Enforcement Officers. Nine release sites were subsequently identified, including one residual site from previous assessments in northwest Indiana (Table 1). The number of birds prescribed for each release site was based primarily on the amount of potential habitat, the release site proximity to other releases or established populations, the distribution of population dispersal corridors across the targeted landscape.

Reconnaissance work for trapping wild turkeys began in December, 2003 with field scouting and prebaiting using shelled corn on the Crane Naval Base, Martin County. Trap sites were prepared and observer blinds set up at several locations where there was significant wild turkey activity in response to prebaiting. Traditional net line sets propelled by 3 rocket charges were used to capture wild turkeys. Cracked corn was used on the trap sites to reduce aspiration problems by wild turkeys related to capture. Captured hens were banded with leg bands and gobblers were marked with patagial wing tags. A wild turkey transportation and release protocol was developed and sent to all participating personnel. Captured birds were generally released within 8 hours of captured with a few late afternoon captures released early the next morning.

A total of 167 wild turkeys was trapped from 6 January to 16 February 2004 with 156 wild turkeys translocated to the nine release sites (Table 2). Five birds (3%) died related to trapping/transportation while one juvenile male was killed by a dog attack immediately post release. Five hens were captured, banded and released on the trap site. A high proportion of translocated birds were adults (74%), which was desirable for restoration due to their generally better survival and productivity post release. Natural resources personnel involved with actual trapping included Larry Allen, Doug King, Bill Seegers, Adam Norman, Bruce Plowman, and the author.

The 2004 restoration work brings the total number of wild turkey releases in Indiana to 185 with 2,795 birds released since 1956. The 2004 restoration effort was the largest number of wild turkeys ever trapped and translocated in-state in a single trapping season that was completed 13 days ahead of the scheduled March 1<sup>st</sup> end date. The high success of the trapping operations resulted from diligent work of the experienced trapping crew, a winter storm that provided several inches of snow cover that persisted for about 2 weeks, the cooperation of Crane Natural Resources personnel, and the extremely good teamwork of the many dedicated Division field personnel who either transported birds for release or assisted in project communications.

In addition to acknowledging the cooperation and efforts of various agency personnel, a special appreciation goes to the Crane Naval Base for allowing access to trap wild turkeys and the Indiana Chapters of the National Wild Turkey Federation for providing funds for acquiring the rocket charges and supporting temporary labor.

#### Literature Cited

Backs, S.E. and C.H. Eisfelder. 1990. Criteria and guidelines for wild turkey release priorities in Indiana. Proceedings National Wild Turkey Symposium 6:134-143



Table 1. Wild turkey release sites for 2004 restoration project.

Release Site	General Description/Location/County	Number of Wild Turkeys (M:F) Recommended*	Counties Potentially Impacted
Iroquois River	Iroquois River drainage near Brook, IN; southern Newton County	4M/11F	Newton and Jasper counties
Wheeling	Mississinewa River drainage near Wheeling, IN; northern Delaware County	6M/14F	Grant, Blackford, and Delaware counties
Pennville	Salamonie River drainage between Montpelier and Pennville, IN; Blackford/Jay County	6M/14F	Blackford, Jay, and Wells counties
Spiceland	Big Blue River drainage near Spiceland and Knightstown, IN; southern Henry County	4M/11F	Henry and Rush counties
Big Blue River	Big Blue River drainage and Six Mile Creek confluence near Morristown, IN; southeast Hancock County	4M/11F	Hancock, Shelby, and Rush counties
Jeff	Salamonie River drainage near Jeff, IN in southwest Wells county	4M/11F	Wells, Blackford, and Huntington counties
Randolph WMA	Mississinewa River drainage near Albany, IN; northwest Randolph County	4M/11F	Randolph, Delaware, and Jay counties
Loblolly Creek	Loblolly Creek drainage near Poling, IN; northcentral Jay County	4M/11F	Jay, Adams, and Wells counties
Eel River	Eel River drainage near South Whitley, IN; southeast Whitely County	4M/11F	Whitely County

\* Prescribed release numbers based on Backs and Eisfelder (1990), general release formula (4 Gobblers:11Hens) and habitat distribution in general release area.

Table 2. Wild turkeys captured 6 January to 16 February 2004.

Release Site	Males		Total Males	Hens		Total Hens	Total Birds
	A	J		A	J		
Iroquois River	4	1	5	5	6	11	16
Wheeling	3	5	8	10	3	13	21
Pennville	3	3	6	10	4	14	20
Spiceland	5	0	5	7	4	11	16
Big Blue River	5	0	5	10	1	11	16
Jeff	3	2	5	11	2	13	18
Randolph WMA	5	0	5	9	2	11	16
Loblolly Creek	4	0	4	7	5	12	16
Eel River	4	0	4	10	3	13	17
Total Birds Translocated	36	11	47	79	30	109	156
<b>Other Captures</b>							
Captured & Released on Trap Site				5			
Died on trap site				3			
Died in Transit				2			
Died on Release (Dog attack)		1					
Total Birds Captured	36	12	48	89	30	119	167



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